Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff wish you a wonderful fall and a terrific Halloween. Might we suggest for a true Halloween “treat” to listen to one of the more elaborate Halloween “tricks” in history. Eighty years ago on October 30, 1938, *The War of the Worlds* radio broadcast panicked millions of Americans. Actor Orson Welles and the Mercury Players dramatized the story by H.G. Wells about a Martian invasion of New Jersey. Their script utilized simulated radio news bulletins which many listeners thought were real. The original broadcast can be found on YouTube.

We had one special tour this month at Cypress Top Historic Park in conjunction with a wedding at Juergen Hall Community Center. One of the parents had attended Cy-Fair High School and wanted to share with the younger generation a place he had frequented in his youth. The guides were provided by the Cypress Historical Society. It was a great opportunity to reminisce and for our staff and volunteers to hear more Cypress history.

The September 21st Senior History Bus Trip toured the Victoria County Courthouse and old town Victoria. Victoria is full of Texas history from pre-settlement times, through the Republic era, all the way to today. The town has been economically successful since its founding in 1824 by Mexican Empresario Martín De León. This has enabled some prosperous families to remain in the area for over 100 years. The stability of these families also allowed the building and maintenance of many beautiful homes. The Old Victoria Driving Tour brochure lists 86 structures, and the overwhelming majority are homes. Our tour was led by Jeff Wright, Executive Director of Victoria Preservation, Inc. Jeff is a wealth of knowledge and seems to have an endless supply of stories for each home.

The McFaddin family was wealthy from ranching, real estate and oil by the late 1800s. One of the senior boys left the Beaumont area and moved to Victoria to start a new ranching enterprise. James succeeded in ranching, oil and real estate, as had his father in Beaumont. Although his 1890 house of Florida pine and cypress may not be as impressive as some, it was designed by architect J. Riely Gordon who designed the 1892 Victoria County Courthouse. McFaddin also had a grander house built diagonally across the intersection as a wedding present for his daughter. She married an artist, McCan, who painted a number of murals in Victoria. That marriage didn’t go so well, but she soon found a second artist to marry, Royston Nave. He died in 1931, and Emily built a memorial to him in 1932. The memorial housed his paintings, which were displayed for visitors. The building became a public library with the paintings above the bookcases. Today it is part of the Victoria Regional Museum Association and displays art, including some of Nave’s works.
While a few of these homes are still owned and occupied by descendants of the original owners, most are not. It requires great dedication, commitment and capital to restore and maintain 100-year-old homes. Having a historic home designation complicates the upkeep and improvements even further. The Michael Lowery Stoner house was held in the family until recently. The owner was elderly and unable to maintain repairs on the home. She also had about 100 cats. She agreed to sell the home but only if the cats were all cared for. The potential buyer was a veterinarian who was able to provide medical care for each cat and find each a loving home. The vet purchased the home and restored it to its original splendor.

Following the driving tour, the group had lunch at a restaurant just a couple of blocks from the courthouse square. The restaurant is in an antique building. The second floor was formerly a series of small bedrooms. The walls of the rooms have been removed and the space now serves as a dining hall. The hamburgers were home-style with sourdough buns and wonderful bread-and-butter pickles.
Following lunch, the seniors toured the Victoria County Courthouse. This 1892 Romanesque Revival structure was designed by the nationally prominent Texas architect J. Riely Gordon. The limestone structure replaced the 1849 courthouse. Public sentiment saved this beautiful building from demolition when a more modern courthouse was constructed on its north side in 1967. The 1892 courthouse, voted one of the ten favorite historic courthouses in Texas, was restored and re-dedicated in 2001 at a cost of $5.6 million.
At left, guide Jeff Wright explains the connected map of the Victoria colony. At right, Jeff points out artifacts in a courthouse room. Photos by Kaitlin Will.

The last stop of the day was at the famous roadhouse in Hillje, Texas. The seniors bought barbeque, bacon, pies and kolaches, not to mention their afternoon coffee, cokes and snacks. It was a good ending to a good day.

**Signing Up for Senior History Bus Trips (Must be at least 50 years old to go on these trips)**

There is now a waitlist for the **October 26** trip to New Braunfels to tour the Comal County Courthouse and Gruene Historic District and the **November 16** trip to the Sam Houston Home and Museum in Huntsville and the Fanthorp Inn in Anderson. You may now sign up for the **December 14** trip to Columbus to visit the historic Tait House and other historic sites in Columbus. Sign up for future trips by emailing cypressstop@pct3.com or calling (281) 357-5324. You may only sign up yourself plus one friend/spouse. No multiple reservations. You will get a confirmation e-mail a week before the trip if you have a seat.

Cypress Top Historic Park is open seven days a week from 7:00 a.m. to dusk. The buildings are open Tuesdays through Thursdays from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Formal tours of the museum complex led by CHS volunteers begin from Juergen’s Store at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. each Tuesday. However, we are happy to have you visit the store anytime while we are there to give you an impromptu tour of any of the buildings. **Group (6 or more) tours may be booked Tuesdays through Saturdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.** Group tours are subject to staff availability, so we recommend you make reservations at least one month in advance. The park and museum buildings are open to all and, as with all events offered at Cypress Top Historic Park, **admissions and tours are free.**

Juergen’s Hall is a community center. It offers many activities and classes for all ages. Please check the Precinct Three website at [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) for hours of operation and offerings of Juergen’s Hall Community Center.

Members of the Cypress Historical Society are in the Cypress Train Depot (bright yellow building) at Cypress Top Historic Park every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and also on the third Saturday of the month from noon to 3 p.m. They have a great deal of genealogy information on most early Cypress area families. Drop in and visit them when you are in the area.

The October and November calendars can be found on the Precinct 3 web site [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com). There is a link from the park web page as well.